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THE
ELEMENTS
OF
BEAUTY.

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THE
ELEMENTS
OF
BEAUTY.

ALSO,
REFLECTIONS
ON THE HARMONY OF
SENSIBILITY AND REASON.

By J. DONALDSON.

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M DCC LXXX.



INTRODUCTION.

THE common error of most of our modern writers on beauty has been, that they have supposed all things, in order to appear completely beautiful, subject to one fixed principle relative only to sense; such as, shape or proportion. Books have been written in support of uniformity and variety; terms comprehending the nature of all things, rather than containing a description alone of what is beautiful: others to persuade us in favour of softness and smoothness, and of a serpentine line of beauty. Propriety has also been assigned as the cause of beauty: but, since there are many things which strike us as beautiful before we discern their usefulness, propriety can at best be admitted a concomitant,

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tant, not an efficient cause, of beauty. Concerning matters of taste, we appeal to the feelings of the heart, rather than to the abilities of the head. Taste prevents judgment, and is more beholden to sentiment than to experience. There is, however, a perfect agreement between right reason and true taste: they are reciprocal tests of each other's validity; since we are not satisfied that such things please, but are apt to inquire into the causes and effects of this pleasure before we allow its authenticity. This has led many to believe, that beauty depends on propriety or fitness; tho' it must be confessed, a toad is as fit for the purposes of its nature as a turtle-dove: and we may remark of artificial ornaments, that they are mostly of little or no utility. Neither is beauty itself the same with
good-

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goodness; but rather what is pleasing to sense, associated with an expression of goodness. To define beauty by softness and smoothness, and the doctrine of mere lines, is reducing it to the notion of simple sensation; but surely one may see and hear, without the perceptions of beauty and harmony peculiar to delicacy of sentiment? For whatever beauty we may perceive in the subordinate objects of sense, it must be confessed, it is an expression of the finer passions, to which we owe the highest pleasures of beauty. And as it is the social or communicative principle which raises our enjoyments so far above the pleasures of other creatures, so it is the visible signs appropriated by nature to this principle, which render the human body superiorly beautiful.

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THE
ELEMENTS
OF
BEAUTY.

SECT. I.

Of the GENERAL SUBJECT.

QUALITIES of objects, so far as they relate to beauty, are either such as most clearly excite *perception* or *life* in the senses; or they are composed of these, and somewhat *expressive* of *life* or *sensibility*.

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As the natural love of life, or the consciousness of existence, is the foundation of all animal-pleasure; so the first and simplest of our sensations, and of which our primary ideas are chiefly compounded, are light, sound, and motion. Their opposites, darkness, silence, and rest, are consequently expressive of horror, on account of their similarity to the privation of sight and of hearing, or to the extinction of those perceptions which principally constitute the simple idea of animation.

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S E C T. II.

Of LIGHT.

ALL the powers of sense may be referred to that of feeling; all the perceptible qualities of bodies may be resolved into motion. Sight is the feeling of the eye; its perceptions depend on the vibrations of some finer medium, which produce the sensation of light. The greatest beauty of light, as confined to sense, seems to be the opposition of its three principal modifications, red, blue, and yellow; or their various changes and gentle gradations, as they are exhibited in the feathers of a peacock,

the prism, or the rainbow: a species of which we also perceive in flowers, and to which they are much beholden for their tender effect.

Colours are beautiful or pleasing as their various contrasts yield a livelier sensation of light, and heighten perception; the colder tints, and those that approach to darkness, improving the lighter, and such as are expressive of warmth and of life.

So far as the effects of light or darkness apply to the expression of human character, we may observe, that, in the turbulent agitations of the mind, the features accumulate a greater degree of shade; the countenance

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nance assumes a dark and cloudy appearance. Gloomy, livid, and black, are complexions suitable to horror, despair, and death.

Our ideas of light, and of heat, are originally and closely connected. That ethereal fire which is the life, is also the light, of the world. The mellow and amber-coloured light, such as is sometimes seen in a serene evening-sky, while it is most delicious to sight, is, of all colours, most expressive of the wholesome degree of warmth congenial to life, or to the kindly and delicious of passion; especially when contrasted by its opposite, black, or deep violet.

The bluish pale of the human countenance, proper to expressions of fear, conveys an idea of coldness; and is that of chilly winter, or of shaded snow. An appearance of violent heat, is expressive of the violence of passion. Anger is denoted by a deep and fiery red. The thunder is thrown by the red right-hand of Jove.

———— while his thunders dire,
With red right-hand, at his own temples hurl'd,
With fear and horror shook the guilty world.

FRANCIS'S HORACE.

Mellow and gentle tones of colour associate with, and dispose to, the gentle and delicate of internal feeling; harsh and sharp ones, with
rude

rude and disagreeable emotions. Faint, pale, and bluish tints, are fitted to express fearfulness, and a diminution of the powers of life: strong and fiery ones, to signify passions of a strong and contrary nature; the violent of the senses ever associating with, and disposing to, the violent or disagreeable of internal sensation.

This analogy might also be traced in the operations of the other senses, smelling, tasting, and feeling. Things that are insipid to taste, that dull the palate, or act on it with violence, are ever ungrateful. That certain degree of softness and smoothness, that gentle resistance, by means of which we

best perceive, will ever be most agreeable to feeling. Smells also may be ranged under the volatile or lively, and the dull. Beside the sleep-causing quality of the poppy when taken into the stomach, the smell is heavy and deleterious; all such smells, therefore, will associate with silence, rest, darkness, and vacuity. Bitter or four things that violently astringe the palate, things harsh to the touch, or that are too strong for smelling, affect the hostile or discordant of passion. But as ideas of beauty chiefly refer to perceptions of sight and of hearing, we shall confine our reflections particularly to those senses.

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It is remarkable, there is a close analogy between the principal signs of life, and the simple or primary objects of sense; the chief characteristics of life being heat, voice, and motion: so that, strictly speaking, whatever objects suggest the sensations similar to the qualities we perceive in ourselves, are the actual and principal causes of pleasure even in the senses.

It is light alone by which the eye enjoys its pleasures of perception; it is light, again, reflected from the eye, to which it owes its superior vivacity and expression. A gentle, yet clear, variation of colour or form, is pleasing to sight, as that of sound is to hear-

hearing; and it is by means of such variations that we communicate our sentiments of pleasure.

S E C T. III.

Of SOUND.

WE have already observed, that sound is one of the first or simple sensations; and that an idea of perfect silence is accompanied with horror, especially when conjoined with darkness and universal rest, as these are analogous to the negation of sense: we shall therefore pass to the consideration of symphony,

ny, or the variations of sound as they are exemplified in musical expression.

Of sounds, the mellow, soft, and gentle, are most pleasing to sense, and best adapted to express the gentle of sentiment. Deep tones associate with deepness of shade, and with slowness of motion. The loud, the sharp, and the shrill, rank with the other ruder causes of perception.

The most refined melody is that which accords with gracefulness of sentiment: it is chiefly employed in quieting the turbulent, and soothing the gentler, emotions. The coarser passions are excited by something
that

that deserves the name of noise or discord, rather than of music. As the violent emotions increase, sensibility is diminished; as the gentler ones increase, sentiment is improved.

In common discourse, which treats of indifferent subjects, and consists mostly of narrative, the voice naturally inclines to a settled monotony, or at best rises to a sort of recitative: as conversation becomes more animated, the variations of voice are proportionally increased. Artificial music is an imitation of these natural variations, as they are more or less expressive of passion, or of all those tender depressions and rapturous elevations

vations of the soul, when she pours herself forth in generous ecstasy: those notes and combinations which please the ear, being adapted to the pleasing of passion; the sad and discordant, as in the passions themselves, to set off the more melodious and cheerful: for our joys are continually mingled with abatement or with sorrow, and are best perceived by a certain degree of contrast; gravity of sound being an approach to silence, as shade to darkness, and as slowness of motion is a drawing nearer to rest. We cannot judge of any thing but by relation, and it is in the *changes* of things that we perceive them.

SECT.

S E C T. IV.

Of MOTION.

CIRCULAR and changing shapes are semblative of motion, as motion is of life. The poets, to distinguish clear running water from that which is at rest, emphatically attribute life to the former :

And bid the handmaids for the feast prepare,
The seats to range, the fragrant wood to bring,
And limpid water from the *living* spring.

POPE'S HOM. ODYSSEY.

An ellipsis or parabola may not improperly be defined, A line whose direction is continually changing; tho' the figure be really permanent, and
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it is evidently the eye which changes. Milton, to express the winding shape of the honeysuckle, calls it *the flaunting honeysuckle*. Thus, beauty of figure becomes a kind of substitute for elegance of motion.

To the most delicate sentiments there are certain kindred forms, sounds, and motions, which naturally associate with, and are best calculated to express, such tenderness of sentiment. As it is, in some sense, alike whether the eye or the object moves, and it is plain that quick turnings in animals indicate a more sudden exertion of the living power than slow ones, it will likewise follow,

follow, that wherever the eye overtakes lines running abruptly into contrary directions, such lines will convey an idea of the sudden changes of passion; though it is not they that move, but the sight which moves along them; since every appearance we have experienced to hold an alliance with life, transferring the emotion to the cause, we are apt to conceive is inspired with passion: thus we say, light is cheerful, motion is sprightly, or sounds are pathetic.

Bodies apparently massy and opaque are understood to be heavy, to affect rest, and consequently silence. The

too much is as incomprehensible as the *too little*, and a certain degree of greatness strikes us much in the same manner as vacuity: thus the ideas of vast magnitude, obscurity, gravity, and stillness, will ever naturally incline to associate.

The determination of bodies upwards is accompanied with a sentiment of liberty and sprightliness. The rising foliage of the Corinthian capital makes the column seem to bear its superstructure, not only with ease, but with cheerfulness. Symptoms of elevated passion are, the head thrown up, the arms raised above the head, like those Bacchanalian figures

gures we see so often represented in the antique. Humility and depression of spirit are expressed by motions of a contrary and listless kind, or rather by languor and suspension of action.

The coarser and more violent passions are to be expressed by rudeness and extravagance of motion, abrupt changes of form and of colour. Sudden turnings and contortions are effects of pain, or belong to the extravagance of passion. An action energetic, yet gentle, is appropriated to emotions of the highest pleasure.

Music has also its counterpart in action: dancing is the music of motion.

tion. Music and dancing express the same thing, only in different ways: the art of dancing teaches to regulate the various movements and gestures of the body to the humour of the music, both answering to the sentiment by which they are mutually inspired.

And in this way even inanimate matter, either by being put in motion, or so ordered as to invite the eye to move, is made to engage the attention, and to affect the passions, agreeable to the signs of such passions in ourselves; whence all our ideas of form originate, and whither also they return by reflection.

S E C T. V.

Of ASSIMILATION.

THOUGH we have no perceptions but what originate from our senses, yet still it is life which pleases, whether enjoyed by the strong and clear images of sense, or whether the impressions of these, mingling into sentimental harmony, are attended with the more refined pleasures of imagination; our ideas, by *assimilation* and *contrast*, improving in strength, mutually assisting each other, and increasing affection, till at length we attain the highest excellence of *moral perception*.

What

What is generally understood by harmony, relates properly to hearing; but there is in nature, or rather in the human mind, a system of universal symphony carried on by means of assimilation and contrast, since there is an attractive as well as a repelling power in every thing that concerns our sentiments and sensations.

The theory of association may be divided into the agreement of objects or qualities respecting any single sense; among various senses; of those of sense with characters of expression; and among various characters, animated or expressive.—Thus, as an

instance of the first kind, gentleness of form, of colour, and of motion, incline to associate.

Things that accord with respect to different senses, are such as excite an equal degree of perception, or a like degree of animation; every thing that is delicate to touch, accompanied with that particular shape, colouring, and modulation of sound, which agree to form an assemblage that is gently engaging. The sweet, soft notes of the *Æolian* harp admirably agree with the still softness of moon-light. The agreeable of colour, figure, smell, and touch, are united by nature in flowers; which

is the reason they are so delicately pleasing.

When more of the senses than one are employed at the same time, they naturally act in unison; and their different powers are to be considered as tending to excite unity of sentiment: to set them in opposition, therefore, would be to destroy the uniformity and energy of their effect.

Things of different kinds associate by some particular and striking similitude; things of like general disposition, by some peculiar difference or contrast. Human characters being included in this last kind, associate by their diversity of expression.

Trees, shrubs, and plants, are to be considered as a distinct species of less perfect characters; and there is an agreement between a proper assemblage of these and human characters, or their particular virtues or passions personified: every thing of the clear or animated kind seeming to attract that which is expressive, in any degree, of a like disposition; and to form a whole, that, by means of its variety or internal contrasts, yields the clearest and most perfect object of perception.

What pleases any one sense, comes as it were recommended to the rest. What is beautiful, we are disposed to

to think is good ; what is good, beautiful. Though here we must properly distinguish between the good, and the beautiful ; between notions of wholesomeness or utility, and that which produces an immediate sensation of pleasure. Respecting the latter, we appeal more directly to the innate and original powers of sense : for the former, to experience ; which teaches us, that what is most beautiful is not ever the best, nor that which is less beholden to favour always the most useless or pernicious. The perpendicular wall of a house is good, because it implies stability ; but it is not therefore beau-

beautiful: on the contrary, the ornamental part strikes us not as being any otherwise useful than that it immediately pleases. The withered leaves of plants frequently exhibit a colouring more agreeable to the eye, than when they are fresh and blooming. The smoke issuing from the chimney of a country cottage cannot, surely, be understood to possess any great appearance of beauty; but the object pleases, because it conveys a lively idea of the snug happiness and warmth of the people within. Other objects, tho' really good or useful, have nothing in them very pleasing to sense, neither

ther do they bear any external marks of sensibility, and therefore cannot be said to partake of beauty. Even with regard to the human character, we do not find that virtue ever accompanies the fairest form.

Things that are associated, by habit, with pleasing objects, though in themselves not agreeable, become, by such habitual association, pleasing, provided the balance be on the agreeable side; but, the lineal and speckled beauty of the serpent will not easily command our attention, so long as the horror continues with which that animal strikes us.

With a lively sentiment, lively
images

images of sense will naturally associate; with the agreeable of the latter, what is agreeable of the former: pleasing associations in the mind being no other than images and sentiments so disposed as to heighten internal perception.

Far-off sounds, or distant prospects, associate with, and bring to remembrance, past circumstances and actions; because these too are become more subtle in imagination, and rendered, as it were, remote by time.

A farewell is more affecting at the end of summer, and at sun-setting, than at any other time or season.

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Tempest and darkness are fuitable
to acts of horror :

Great Jove, to swell the horror of the fight,
O'er the fierce armies pours pernicious night.

POPE'S HOM. IL. B. xvi.

The elemental storm in Shakespear's Lear, finely assimilates the storm in the mind of the distressed king. Why are lovers fond of moon-light, but because, like soft music, it suits the tender melancholy of their souls? There is a fine assemblage of languid motion, sadness, and obscurity, in the following description of old Laertes in his rural retirement :

Where,

Where, sole of all his train, a matron sage
 Supports, with homely steps, his drooping age;
 With feeble steps, from marshalling his vines,
 Returning sad, when toilsome day declines.

POPE'S HOM. ODYSSEY. B. I.

Thus, to human action and incident, a counterpart or harmony is carried on by means of proper accessories or scenery.

S E C T. VI.

Of CONTRAST.

WITHOUT motion, light, and sound, all our perceptions of sight and hearing must be at an end:

but

but it is necessary, to render light visible, that there be darkness; as it is requisite, to render sound audible, that there be silence; and that there be rest, to show that there is motion.

There is clearly a relation between time and space; and it has much the same effect, whether a great darkness be opposed to a small light, or a long-continued darkness to a light of short duration. Every thing seems to suffer an alteration from the changes of time and place; that is, according to the comparison of successive incidents, or by the opposition
of

of 'present circumstances by which qualities are compared.

The precise effect of any object to the eye, depends either on its immediate opposition to other objects, or on the more remote relation it bears to such as are retained by memory. This may be further explained by harmony and melody, in music; the first being an effect produced by the immediate opposition of different notes; whereas, in melody, we compare the present sounds with the impression of those that are past.

Colours are properly opposed to colours, and lines to lines; but we must not attempt to set in opposition

tion the effect of objects which belong to different senses, neither is it necessary that there should always be an immediate contrast, since the mind, retaining former impressions, will associate such of them with the present as composes the melody most grateful to itself. For we can suppose no absolute and single beauty, without supposing a mind totally divested of all other ideas. If memory retain perceptions of other objects, it is impossible to preclude comparison.

Counterpoint, in music, is the accompaniment which contrasts the general effect of the melody, as

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shade

shade supports light in painting; not respecting any part singly, but sustaining and heightening each particular melody in the relative effect and proportion it bears to the whole.

Uniformity is the contrast to variety, and minuteness the relative measure of magnitude. The inflected sharpnesses of visible objects, set off to advantage their protuberant roundings; the former lead to an idea of non-entity, the latter to a notion of plenitude and existence. Roundness, softness, and smoothness, are pleasing, but not by themselves: it is the rough and the sharp
which

which give energy to composition; a general idea of beauty being consequent to an assemblage of every quality of matter, where the predominant signs of materiality and of gentle feeling are still set off by the obscure foil of their respective contraries or privations. An idea of light arises, as it were, out of darkness. Sound seems to originate from silence; and motion from rest. Even matter itself seems to emerge from the empty abyss of space; imagination, in all its conjunctions, like a skilful musician, still proceeding by the rule of contraries.

When any object, however com-

plete in its own nature, enters into composition, it then becomes a part of a greater whole, respecting which it must appear to hold a like relation as its own parts one to another; though even contrast itself must be in a manner contrasted. Thus small oppositions, uniting in effect, are formed into wholes, which, in their collective capacity, produce greater and more striking oppositions.

SECT.

S E C T. VII.

Of PERSONIFICATION.

BUT though the simple ideas of horror be immediately borrowed from the privations of sense, it is otherwise when its images are personified. In this case, *violent motion*, and *loud noise*, succeed to rest and silence. Animated terror *lightens* through the gloom of darkness.

Death darkly *bounds* from line to line,
Loud tumults shake the field.

Now, *rushing* in, the furious chief appears,
Gloomy as night, and shakes two shining spears;

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A dreadful gleam from his bright armour came,
And from his eye-balls *flash'd* the living flame.

POPE'S HOM. IL. xii. 555.

The negative terrors of privation assume the form of positive destruction. Every thing that assails the senses violently, is personified; and life, clad in the armour of the foe, is apparently turned against itself. Indeed, wherever the elements are thrown into violent commotion and uproar, it amounts to a kind of personification: the metaphorical terms used on such occasions are always taken from ideas of real life; the wind *roars*, the sea *rages*, the heavens *look angry*, and the thunder appears to

to *threaten* destruction to the universe. And these seem to be the chief materials of what may be called the sentimental sublime, amounting only to the animation of those very causes which produced the sublime or terrible of the senses. Thus, by the powers of imagination, even death itself is animated and personified.—Man is an image admiring his own likeness: and such is his inclination to admire every thing that has life, that what is wanting in nature he frequently supplies from fancy; and when disposed to admiration, he enlivens every thing, that he may still find more occasion to admire.

Passion, or sentiment, being originally the effect of external sense, cannot be conceived to exist in absence of the material images or impressions of substance; since we cannot conceive the passion of love to be any other than a quality belonging to some being or person who loves, or is capable of loving. Neither can we suppose passion to be impassioned, or affection itself to be affected. In order to extend our powers of affection, therefore, we materialize and personify the very affections themselves. It is impossible, otherwise, to render the abstract ideas of goodness distinct or engaging.

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And here we may observe the force of the first images, even in the highest moral sense. Every amiable virtue is arrayed in white or light: Innocence, Simplicity, Truth herself, still retaining what was at first grateful to sight; every thing that is good, every thing that is pleasing, borrowing a metaphor from light, is called fair, bright, or beautiful. VIRTUE, or GOODNESS, is the LIGHT and the LIFE; the *evil* or *immoral* is the *obscure* of human action; because that, too, implies the *privation* of life or of happiness. What is *pain*, but *death positive*? what *happiness*, but *life and pleasing sensibility*?

SECT.

S E C T. VIII.

Of CHARACTER and EXPRESSION.

CHARACTER is that which distinguishes one object from another. Whatever most resembles the symptoms of sensibility in ourselves, we discern to have the greatest share of expression. That particular object is most agreeably distinguished, which either affects the senses by exciting the liveliest perceptions; or which, by means of what is delightful to sense, expresses the clearest sense of internal perception.

The same power by which the
nerves

nerves of the human body are internally agitated, affects their extremities, and induces an alteration in the external form. The pleasures of sensation are again reflected outwards, and again are perceived by the senses, communicating a new and social happiness. It is not till goodness be thus expressed, that it assumes the nature of beauty.

All pleasure, whether proceeding from simple or complex causes, may be distinguished as follows: first, the pleasure of perceiving the qualities of objects by means of sense, *by which* we know that we exist; secondly, the social satisfaction of
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perceiving an expression of this pleasure in others, by which we know that they live or exist; thirdly, the pleasure of perceiving the social or communicative principle, and that this is mutually perceived in ourselves, including all the former pleasures, and to which they are to be considered only as assisting and subservient.

Some of our perceptions of pleasure proceed from powers original and innate; others are derived from experience and custom, such as that which renders things, disagreeable in themselves, pleasing when we are accustomed to find them associated with

with circumstances and objects that are in themselves agreeable. Many are the characters already established by nature; and even artificial characters derive a kind of propriety from custom, which is rightly termed a second nature. Is it the character of the eye to be lucid, and of the cheek to be red? a bright eye, and a rosy cheek, are, of their kind, the most beautiful; each part being beautiful, either according to the degree of gentle expression it possesses in itself, or as it is habitually associated with parts that are more gently expressive. Yet, we may observe, that this very expression depends,
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for its effect, on being properly disposed and contrasted, otherwise it could not properly be perceived.— One constituent of beauty, is colour; another, shape or proportion: but a variety of gaudy colours would destroy the effect of beautiful form. It is necessary, therefore, in order to produce an agreeable effect, that there be a union and subordination in the means of expression, and that none of the less essential qualities confound the greater; as it is requisite, in order to render any more complicated character or composition perfect, that there be a chief or principal part, which is most striking
or

or expressive: the countenance being the most remarkable part of the human body; as, in the countenance, the eye is the principal feature. Even one part of the same body owes its beauty to the affinity it bears to the rest, as the beauty of the whole depends on its opposition to other bodies. The neck of a statue, were it ever so well shaped, would not appear beautiful when separated from the head and shoulders; the seeming softness and smoothness of the bosom would cease to please, did the head and shoulders seem to be equally soft and smooth. Complete characters or wholes, to render their
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qualities striking or perceptible, must likewise be properly contrasted. And it is as necessary that man be distinguished from man, as man from other creatures: for this cause, in the composition of a truly beautiful human character, it is required, that there be a certain turn or singularity of form and of feature, as well as an air or expression on the whole, to establish an identity, difference, and superiority, respecting all other characters, to render it peculiarly perceptible and engaging.

SECT.

S E C T. IX.

Of GRACEFULNESS.

IN speaking of expression, we must distinguish between an expression of the benevolent kind, and of the irascible or malignant. Animals of coarser natures are fully as susceptible of anger, hatred, revenge, or any of the hostile passions, as men; and the basest of the human race are ever most subject to such passions: but they know little of pity, love, esteem, or any of the gentler ones. The malignant passions disqualify the mind for every pleasing and ingenious sensation. Anger is the

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painful or stupifying passion, as love is the delicious and enlivening one. It would therefore be highly improper to apply the idea of gracefulness to one in a fit of rage or jealousy; what pleases most in appearance, being evidently an expression of pleasure.

He who seeks to know the origin of gracefulness, must look for it in his own mind; whatever is graceful there, must be so in expression. It is a quality analogous to the most exquisite tenderness of affection; that sweet enthusiasm of action which goes hand in hand with beauty; or, if we may be allowed the phrase, it

is

is the *soul* of beauty, or the *emphasis* of pleasing expression.

In the tenderest and most delightful moments of thought, the body is naturally thrown into attitudes which have the power of communicating a like softness to the minds of others; it is on account of this pleasing sympathy, that we bestow on such actions or expressions the appellation of *graceful*.—Much has been said about an appearance of ease peculiar to gracefulness; yet perhaps it will be impossible to find an example of any very graceful attitude that conveys not some degree of carefulness or anxiety. The sweet,

reluctant amorous delay, the hopes, fears, and tender solitudes of love, present us with images of the utmost gracefulness. Even in circumstances that have an appearance of distress, beauty oft assumes an air of the sublimest grace and dignity. There is indeed a certain elevation of mind, a happy consciousness of superior virtue, requisite to dignify every passion, and is essential to grace; for there is no grace without dignity. Grace is the sublimity of beauty; the modest pride of virtue; the gentle dignity of love. An attitude expressive of the pensive and pleasing melancholy, a sentiment peculiar

culiar to the finest souls, is ever most graceful. The loveliest of the Graces has on her face a cast of sadness mixt with the sweetest joy. Gracefulness is an expression of pleasure; but pleasure is not ease, it is something more. In truth, the mind is far from being most happy when most at ease; this being at best a negative kind of happiness: in order to be really so, it must be employed in some pursuit wherein it is deeply concerned, and its affections fondly engaged: beset on all sides with danger and fear, we embrace with rapture every occasion of hope, and become more interested and happy

in the pursuit and accomplishment of our wishes, as the labour appears more arduous of overtaking them.

Here we mean not to say, that graceful action may not be frequently found without its peculiar energy in the mind: we only advance, that our prejudices in favour of gracefulness are originally founded on this principle; and would thence infer, that any appearance of beauty which is consistent with perfect indolence or ease, can suggest nothing more than a predisposition to elegance of action, a seeming aptitude in the external symptoms of affection. It is
not

not till the passions have arrived at maturity, and are sweetened by the accession of love, that the person assumes a true air of delicate gracefulness. If one who has no elegance of soul appear graceful, it is by accident, as a fool sometimes looks wise. In love, the soul is feelingly alive to every finer sense, and it is the finest expression of life which excites it; love personified being perfect beauty.

When we meet with a passage in any author that expresses a lively sentiment of compassion, joy, grief, for even the sorrow of sensible persons is frequently accompanied with

pleasure, there is always presented to us along with it, an image of gracefulness. It is this delicious enthusiasm which so conspicuously distinguishes the works of *Raphaël* and *Correggio*; it is this alone which raises above others the writings of the divine *Sappho*. The great charm of poetry is that *spirit* or *muse* which inspires every thing with elegance and *animation*. The beautiful and the graceful of sentiment, are expressions of the highest degree of *life* or *human feeling*.

The *Venus of Medicis* is generally given as an example of female beauty, and indeed is probably the most
grace-

graceful and perfect of all human productions ; but this statue is highly imitative of modesty, that exquisite grace and ornament of every amiable virtue. Were an artist to attempt a painting of the like kind, how might he still heighten every grace by diffusing a sweet blush over the countenance of his figure ; a circumstance in which the marble is necessarily defective ? And this is, no doubt, what is meant by that fine allegory of Venus attired by the Graces, that every thing which is graceful in outward appearance, is only as it were the trappings and ornaments of that heavenly love of the soul, by the ancients

cients ascribed to the *Venus Urania*, or celestial; in opposition to what is attributed to the other *Venus*, worshipped by them as the earthly and vulgar.

THUS have we briefly traced the progress of beauty from its beginning in the *senses*, to its second source of perfection in the *mind*, both centring in the consciousness of *life* or *sensibility*: and as we have before observed, that whatever causes suggest the sensations similar to the qualities we perceive in ourselves, are the actual and principal pleasures of the senses; so it is still more worthy

thy our notice, that nothing gives us so much satisfaction, as to contemplate the symptoms of pleasure or happiness in those whose merit and beauty entitle them to a share either in our love or estimation.

It is at this second period pleasure loses the name of sensual or selfish. He who possesses this more extensive animation, is consequently interested in the happiness of his fellow-creatures, as also in the study of every thing that is related to this finer animation; and, as he perceives beauty in these things, he will interest himself in their perfection, looking on
them

them as in some measure related to himself, and as portions of that universal and social whole, of which he considers himself also as a part.

Hence we may conclude, that the relish mankind have for true beauty, is in proportion to the clearness of their moral perceptions; or, in other words, to their love of goodness: that even inanimate beauty is chiefly a secondary idea, or association, arising from the external symptoms of natural affection, which is the beauty of the human soul: and that not only whatever tends to deprive us of life, but whatever obstructs the
exer-

OF BEAUTY. 69

exercife of the finer powers, whereon depends the confcioufnefs of life, provokes *forrow, fear, and horror*; whatever has the contrary effect, promotes HOPE, LOVE, and JOY.

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REFLECTIONS
ON THE
HARMONY
OF
SENSIBILITY AND REASON.

XII

INTRODUCTION.

THE pleasures attending virtue, are, first, the immediate satisfaction we enjoy in contributing to the happiness of others, virtue in this case being its own best reward; not that it bestows because it receives, but that it receives because it bestows, as a luminous body is yet more enlightened by the reflection of its own splendor. Secondly, the pleasure we receive from the approbation of the world, or rather of that part of it whose applause we esteem, the pleasure proceeding from what is commonly called the love of fame.—Selfishness is that contracted sense of pleasure which excludes every idea of social enjoyment. It is a mere abuse of words to call that *selfishness* which includes the happiness of others;

F since,

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since, in the strict idea of a self, there is but one included.

True happiness flows from the first-mentioned principle, and is the enjoyment of pleasure by reflection, the pleasure of pleasing those we love, or the still more extensive pleasure of contributing to the happiness of all mankind. The first and second of those motives are indeed assisting to each other; for what can be more pleasing than self-applause when confirmed by the approbation of the good? But those who are actuated merely by the love of fame, are far more numerous than those who first consult the approbation of their own hearts, and who esteem the applause of the many, not altogether for its own sake, but as it accords with the voice of reason; while he whose feelings teach him to distinguish between the

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the good and the evil of moral action, will also have a choice in the rectitude of external applause, always preferring the commendation of the few who bestow it on real merit, to the voice of the vulgar, which is determined by caprice or by accident.

But what shall we say to such as place their ultimate contentment in selfishness and sensuality, whose sympathy is so narrowly confined, that they enjoy no pleasure from participation? or to those that are so far depraved, as to be deterred from actions hurtful to themselves and to their fellow-creatures, by no other than the basest of all motives, the dread of punishment? Were it possible to persuade mankind, what is their chief interest here to know, that to assist the good endeavours, and to sympa-

76 INTRODUCTION.

thize with the weaknesſes and neceſſities of each other, yields an enjoyment far ſuperior to any that is of a mere ſelfiſh nature, there would be little occaſion, in a moral view, to threaten the infliction either of temporal or eternal puniſhment. Indeed it ſeems almoſt ſufficiently juſt, if there be any totally deſtitute of humanity, that ſuch, from their dulneſs, are deprived of the moſt elegant and exalted felicity:

Self-ſatisfaction, it muſt be confeſſed, is an object of purſuit in all; but ambition and avarice embrace the ſhadow for the ſubſtance, the means of good for good itſelf. The vainly-ambitious place their chief happineſs in fame, ignorant of what ſhould go before; the avaricious in fortune, equally blind to the bleſſings that ſhould follow. To employ every
gentle

INTRODUCTION. 77

gentle method, therefore, of extending this principle of human sympathy; to improve our most delicate feelings, and give to the soul a more tender touch of all that is endearing to humanity, by exercising it in the speculation and practice of ingenious virtue, is the great purpose of moral precept and of sound philosophy.

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THE

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REFLECTIONS

ON THE

HARMONY

OF

SENSIBILITY AND REASON.

SECT. I.

Of SENSIBILITY.

THE good qualities of the head and of the heart are rarely found together; their union composes a mind truly noble. The folly of ill-directed goodness too nearly resembles vice; the wis-

80 SENSIBILITY

dom of the unfeeling is worse than folly.

THE same principle which prompts a man to seek happiness, or to relieve himself in distress, disposes him to make others happy, or to alleviate their distresses. The less sensibility any man possesses, his affections are the more selfish; the more he is sensible of happiness himself, he is the more disposed to make others happy.

THAT peevish weakness and fore-
ness of nerve, which is apt to be
alarmed at trifles, and to be displea-
sed without sufficient cause, is to be
classed with other distempers; it is
false

false or diseased feeling. Some are rather irritable than sensible; their coarser natures are capable only of the malevolent and grosser passions.

A PREDISPOSITION to the coarser passions can never proceed from delicacy of sentiment, but argues a condition the very reverse: true sensibility is ever inclined to overlook errors, and to forgive injuries; altho', on some occasions, reason teaches it to act with becoming dignity and spirit. Mens enjoyments or misfortunes are to be computed from their different degrees of feeling. What can they mean who speak of
the

the happiness of the insensible? Can there be a greater absurdity, than to envy the enjoyments of such as want the power to enjoy?

S E C T. II.

TASTE *and* GENIUS.

AN original delicacy of taste is also the inseparable effect and symptom of the true sensibility; which includes not only a sense of love, pity, gratitude, or common duty, for of those even the rudest natures are seldom altogether destitute; but it is a certain elegance of soul,
which

which renders kindness most kind, and pleasure most pleasing; it is genius and taste, the tenderness of friendship, the politeness of esteem, and the exquisite and refined endearments of love!

TASTE is the younger sister of Virtue; the offspring of Taste is Pleasure, that of Virtue is Happiness: it is the grace of sentiment: that which pleases such as are susceptible of the highest pleasure; a subordinate, yet more amiable quality, which depends on the nicer discernments of sensibility.

ON the clearness of moral perception, or sentimental light, depends the

84 SENSIBILITY.

the power of choosing the good and refusing the evil. Whatever is properly said to improve the mind, increases this faculty of accepting and refusing, by rendering the characters of good and evil more perspicuous and distinct.

ALL ignorance of beauty, or depravity of taste, is defective animation; all improvement and perfection of these, is increased sensibility; the powers of the mind, as well as of the body, being rendered more perfect by a proper exercise of them. To question whether an improved taste be an advantage, is in some measure to doubt whether it is better

AND REASON. 85

ter to be or not to be, to live or not to live. One devoid of taste, is dead to all the finer feelings.

THERE is acquired as well as natural dulness; bad taste, or evil prejudice, is stupidity acquired. To feel, is to be alive; every thing that heightens sentiment or perception, therefore, increases animation.

GENIUS is the power or capacity of clearly conceiving, and properly combining, images and sentiments, either as they relate to what is commonly called utility, or to taste; it is the highest effect of sensibility and reason, the power of associating ideas harmoniously.—Poetry, painting,
and

86 SENSIBILITY.

and music, are sciences peculiarly be-
holden to genius: poetry is the lan-
guage of elevated and refined pas-
sion; painting is silent poetry; mu-
sic is the accent of passionate expres-
sion.

GENIUS is also used to denote a
particular turn for any study or em-
ployment; but one may have a turn
for a study that requires, properly
speaking, little or no genius.

SECT.

S E C T. III.

POETRY, PAINTING, *and* MUSIC.

A GOOD poem is an effect of the highest effort of human imagination and judgment.

MERE imitation is beneath the dignity of poetry, painting, and music. An artist should represent objects not always as they are; but as they tend to soothe some pleasing disposition of the soul, or as they are heightened in imagination when it is predisposed to sentiment and to passion.

To be insensible of the musical powers, is to be so far ignorant of the
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• language of the finer passions; but it is evident, one who never felt the refinements of pity, or of love, cannot conceive how music should express them, or dispose to such gentle emotions.

MUSIC is the means of soothing and exciting the virtuous dispositions of the soul: so far as it answers this end, it is to be esteemed; otherwise it is fit only to tickle the ears of such as have no hearts, whose presumption is ever proportioned to their ignorance and want of feeling.

IN all things the pleasing of sense associates with the pleasing of sentiment,

ment, and disposes the mind to happiness and benevolence.

S E C T. IV.

LOVE *and* FRIENDSHIP.

AS two different notes sounded at the same time beget harmony, a quality which belongs to neither of them apart; so desire and esteem, mutually improving each other, generate love; a passion different from either, yet superior to both.

LOVE, in absence of reason, and hatred, have almost the same ends

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and wishes. Those only are capable of true friendship, who know what is kind and agreeable on every occasion to do or to say, and are sensibly pleased with what is well said and done. A fool can never enjoy the pleasures of love: he may indeed taste something of the mere animal part; but not the infinite endearments that heighten and protract pleasure, nor that sweet mixture of love and esteem which increases with enjoyment.

THEY are mistaken who suppose, that the most firm friendships subsist between persons of exactly similar qualities and dispositions: such similarity

milarity is more likely to produce rivalry than friendship. There should rather be on the one side a little more judgment, and on the other a little more sensibility; and the parties should be sensible of each other's perfections: this observation holds peculiarly respecting the sexes.

A DELICACY of person and of mind, approaching to weakness, is becoming in a female; less softness, and more strength, are expected in the male: they ought to make up a complete character together, rather than two alike perfect and distinct ones; the dispositions of one sex be-

ing qualified by the peculiar perfections of the other. Nature, by distinguishing the characters of the sexes, has removed all rivalry between them, which otherwise might have been a hindrance to the union of love and friendship.

WHATEVER peculiar difference marks the delicacy of the female character, renders the person of a woman most lovely, and this propriety holds also respecting her mind; it is that tenderness of passion, delicacy of taste, and retired modesty, naturally peculiar to the sex, which renders her most amiable in the esteem of a man of feeling.

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THE tenderness of love and friendship affects a narrow circle; the more intense the passion, it is the more liable to be confined. However, universal love and particular friendship are noways inconsistent; different degrees of esteem are suitable to different degrees of merit, and friendship is contracted and confirmed by habit and close acquaintance: one may be a well-wisher to all, but can have a friendship only for a few; a perfect love but for one.

AN extended principle of benevolence comprehends, a friend, a family, country, and all the world;

and, according to the extent of this principle, our capacity for happiness is extended.

S E C T. V.

COURAGE *and* HONOUR.

WE must distinguish manly courage from beastly ferocity; it is absurd to suppose, that courage can exist where there is no apprehension of danger: the mind that is capable of honour, cannot be insensible to fear; the former overcoming the latter, in a noble cause, is true bravery.

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RANCOUR and revenge are too frequently taken for symptoms of a nice sense of honour, than which no qualities can be more opposite to a refined sensibility.

HONOUR relates to those parts of human conduct not particularly taken notice of by the laws. It teaches a man to preserve inviolate the secrets, and to support the interest and reputation, of a friend; to be strictly just, where no public law obliges him to justice; to fulfill all equitable engagements; to hold most sacred all honest trust reposed in him. It is a conscious dignity of spirit, which teaches to commit no-
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thing that is mean or disgraceful; but which excites to generous and noble actions, proceeding from a peculiar delicacy of sentiment, assisted and tempered by the fortitude of reason.

S E C T. VI.

CONSCIENCE.

ALL right rules of conduct are drawn from the natural affections, and from experience. The same affection which teaches us to love our fellow-creatures, reproaches us when we neglect or behave ill to them;

them; and this last operation of affection is called remorse, or check of conscience: but by habit or education, an artificial conscience may be created, which may either serve to strengthen or to subvert the conscience of nature:—

THUS, a stronger remorse will follow a crime committed against natural affection, when confirmed by civil policy and habit, than could follow from either of these motives alone.

NATURE has established a common and instinctive attachment between parent and child, as also among other relations; but the strongest

strongest of all affections is that which is conceived by those who love and esteem each other on account of their superior endowments.

A MAN may love his children from the same principle that any animal loves its young; but if he also perceives that they are virtuous, there results from such a conjunction a benevolence not to be expressed. This is natural affection, as highly confirmed and approved by reason.

THAT an innate sensibility leads to the consciousness of good and evil, is certain; but it is also certain, that
this

this natural sense may be improved by reason, or perverted by prejudice; and that the laws of conscience are frequently derived from custom, which rivets the chains of error. To overcome evil opinions, therefore, the mind must get the better of all prejudices or perversions of conscience, and establish a consciousness of right on the solid foundation of just sentiment and reason.

SECT.

S E C T. VII.

SINCERITY.

A LITTLE judgment, with less sensibility, makes a man cunning; a little more feeling, with even less reason, would make him sincere.

SOME have no more knowledge of humanity, than just serves them to put on an appearance of it, to answer their own base and selfish purposes.

HE who prefers cunning to sincerity, is insensible to the disgrace and suspicion which attend craft and deceit, and to the social satisfaction
which

which the generous mind finds in honesty and plain-dealing.

MEN who know not the pleasures of sincerity, and who traffic in deceit, barter an image of kindness for a shadow of joy, and are deceived more than they deceive.

S E C T. VIII.

PASSION.

LET us suppose an end of passion, there must be an end of all moral reasoning. Passion alone can correct passion. Thus we forego a present pleasure, in hopes that we shall

shall afterwards enjoy a greater pleasure, or of longer duration; or suffer a present pain, to escape a greater: and this is called an act of the judgment. He who gives way to the dictates of present passion, without consulting experience, listens to a partial evidence, and must of course determine wrongfully.

SOME, in order to pay a false compliment to sentimental pleasures, attempt altogether to depreciate the pleasures of sense: with as little justice, though with like plausibility, have men endeavoured to decry the natural passions and affections, as inconsistent with human felicity. Not
from

from our natural desires and passions do we suffer misery; for, without these, what pleasure can we be supposed to enjoy? but from false desires, or diseased appetites, acting without the aid of experience and understanding.

7 HE who commits an action which debases him in his own mind, besides its other evil consequences, lays up a store of future misery, which will haunt him as long as the memory of the deed remains.

ALONG with the present effects of any action, in order to judge of it aright, we must put in the balance also its future consequences, and
con-

consider, on one side, the satisfaction and honour; on the other, the evil and disgrace that may attend it.

MAGNANIMITY exercises itself in contempt of labours and pains, in order to avoid greater pains, or overtake greater pleasures.

S E C T. IX.

TEMPERANCE.

THE great rule of sensual pleasures is, to use them so as they may not destroy themselves, or be divorced from the pleasures of sentiment;

ment; but rather as they are assisted by, and mutually assisting to, the more refined and exalted sympathy of rational enjoyment.

MEN ever confine the meaning of the word pleasure to what pleases themselves: gluttons imagine, that by pleasure is meant gluttony. The only true epicures are such as enjoy the pleasures of temperance. Small pleasures seem great to such as know no greater. The virtuous man is he who has sense enough to enjoy the greatest pleasure.

SUPERFLUITY and parade among the vulgar-rich, pass for elegance and greatness. To the man of true taste,

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temperance is luxury, and simplicity grandeur.

WHATEVER pleasures are immediately derived from the senses, persons of fine internal feeling enjoy besides their other pleasures; while such as place their chief happiness in the former, can have no true taste for the delicious sensations of the soul.

THEY who divide profit and honesty, mistake the nature either of the one or the other. We must make a difference between appearances and truths: the really profitable and the good are the same.

FALSE appearances of profit are
the

the greatest enemies to true interest. Future sorrows present themselves in the disguise of present pleasures, and short-sighted Folly eagerly embraces the deceit.

EVERY species of vice originates either from insensibility, from want of judgment, or from both. No maxim can be more true, than that all vice is folly. For, either by vice we bring misery more immediately on ourselves, or we involve others in misery: if any one bring evil on himself, it is surely folly: if his present pleasure be to make others miserable, were he to escape every other punishment, he must suffer for it by

remorse, or it is a certain proof he is deprived of that sense or sympathy which is the opposite of dulness; in either of which cases, it is evident, that all vice is folly.

S E C T. X.

WISDOM.

WISDOM, or Virtue, is nothing more than the disposition to enjoy and to confer the greatest happiness, with the knowledge how to attain and to bestow it.

WISDOM has ever some benevolent

lent end in her purposes and actions: on the contrary, Folly either mistakes evil for good; or, when she assumes the nature of vice, entertains a malevolent intention.

THE advantages and defects of nature should be considered as common to society: the weak have a claim to the assistance of the strong, the strong derive a pleasure from assisting the weak, and the wise are so far happy as the well-disposed partake of their wisdom.

THERE is no one virtue that includes not, in a general sense, all the other virtues. Wisdom cannot subsist without justice, temperance, and

fortitude; for wisdom is the sum of all these. It is impossible to be just without temperance, or temperate without fortitude; and so alternately of the rest.

S E C T. XI.

POWER.

POWER is no good quality by itself; it is the power of doing good, alone, that is desirable to the wise. All vice is selfishness, and the meanest is that which is most contractedly selfish,

GREAT

AND REASON. 111

GREAT minds can reconcile sublimity to good-humour; in weak ones, it is generally coupled with severity and moroseness.

SUBLIME qualities men admire; they love the gentler virtues. When Wisdom would engage a heart, she wooes it in a smile. What the austere man advises with his tongue, his frown forbids.

MENS ambition of wealth and of power seems to increase in proportion to their inability to enjoy any refined pleasure.

No man has a natural right to hold a greater share of power than another, unless he possesses a higher

degree of merit: if his servants are better than himself, he but usurps his place. Every one should fill that department for which he is fitted by nature, where he can be happiest himself, and where he can best contribute to the happiness of society.

THE vulgar-rich call the poor the vulgar: let us learn to call things by their proper names; the rude and ungentle are the vulgar, whether, in fortune, they be poor or rich.

THE truly poor and worthless are those who have not sense to perceive the

the superiority of internal merit to all foreign or outward accomplishments.

S E C T. XII.

JUSTICE *and* MERCY.

IT is not so proper to say, that virtue leads to happiness, as to affirm, that whatever leads to real happiness is virtue. The reason why certain actions are forbidden by law, is, that such actions are found by experience to be attended with evil effects.

BUT

BUT, because very few indeed are themselves capable of taking such an extended view of things as to enable them to judge of all the good or evil consequences of actions, laws are established for the direction of the weak, and to restrain the vicious from committing actions that, in their effects, are evil.

THE fear of legal punishment presents the only hold that can be taken of those who have no feeling for others; by which they are taught, at least, to feel for themselves.

No action is evil altogether because it is contrary to law; but certain actions are justly forbidden by
law,

law, because their effects are experienced to be evil.

LET us be careful to separate the idea of justice from that of revenge, which, like other malevolent passions, is to be restrained by reason: the great end of human justice, is public or private security; but forbearance and mercy often reclaim, when violence and severity would be attended with evil consequences: for this cause, it is sometimes proper to return good for evil, and to mitigate the rigour of laws with mercy.

WHATEVER severity justice may be obliged to inflict, it is still with a
view

view to greater kindness. To restore the criminal himself to a sense of his duty, to set an example to others, or to rid society of a desperate member, are the three rational ends for which punishment or death is inflicted: otherwise retribution of evil is malevolence or blind revenge, and not justice.

THERE are certain exceptions to general laws, wherein justice assumes the name of mercy: he who, in his conduct, observes these exceptions, is justly merciful.

IT is owing to the imperfection of human laws, which cannot provide against all accidental circumstances

stances and exceptions, that an idea of mercy is opposed to that of justice: these virtues, however, are not really repugnant; where mercy is proper, it were unjust not to be merciful.

THERE is hardly any such passion among the virtuous as hatred: the vicious hate the enemies of vice; the good pity the enemies of virtue. A generous mind wishes not to find men faultless, but is happy in finding occasions of forgiving their errors.

THE violent and hostile passions are never employed by the wise, but
for

for the greater purposes of benevolence.

To withhold our power, when we can prevent the ruin of a fellow-creature, even against his will, is to be guilty of his destruction. Where is the difference in effect, whether evils are brought on us by our follies, or by fate? Is a man the less to be pitied who falls, for that his weakness was the cause of his falling?

Who, if he saw a child approaching the brink of a precipice, would withhold his assistance, on a pretence that the child was left to the freedom of its own will? Men are like children,

dren, that sometimes must be restrained from the ways of error.

THUS it has been instanced, thro' the whole of this performance, that *sensibility*, as directed by *reason*, constitutes VIRTUE.

F I N I S.



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